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STAFF STUDY
ON THE
FUNCTION AND STATUS OF THE POLITICAL
ADVISER IN A MILITARY THEATRE OF OPERATIONS

OBJECT

To develop a concept of the functions and status of the Political Adviser in a Military Theatre of Operations for discussion and co-ordination with the Department of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

It should be noted that this paper confines itself to consideration of the single basic problem of the relationship of the American Political Adviser to the American Theatre Commander in an American Theatre of Operations, and does not attempt to discuss his status in UN, NATO or other combined commands. This limitation is deliberate as it is believed that if full understanding and agreement on the nature of this basic relationship between U.S. Political Adviser and U.S. Theatre Commander can be reached, the complicating factors involved in specific international commands can be dealt with more readily.

This paper has been prepared with the active assistance of an informal committee of the several officers on duty with the Department who have had Political Adviser experience. These include Mr. Durbrow, Mr. Drumright, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Bishop, Mr. Emmerson, Mr. Davies, Mr. Reinhardt, Mr. Byington, Mr. Laukhuff, Mr. Lewis Jones, Mr. Greene. Ambassador Murphy who has been consulted has expressed agreement with

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the proposed paper on the basis of an earlier draft (see letter, Tab A) as has Mr. Sebald, Ambassador Heath, Julius Holmes, Mr. MacArthur, Mr. Beam and Mr. Jacobs. It has also been coordinated with Mr. Byroade. (Also George Kennan, Gen. Hildineg, Ambassador Muecio).

Henry Carter
Consultant

June 28, 1951.

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DISCUSSION

During the last war, Political Advisers as such first appeared as recognized figures in U.S. Theatres of Operations. Admitting them to the Theatres was an innovation in American military peacetime suggested by the practice of the British who employed Political Advisers extensively and effectively, and lent great weight to their counsels. However in U.S. Theatres their role and function and status seldom achieved the definiteness and general understanding attained by the British, either in the eyes of the American Commanders and their staffs, in their own eyes, or in the eyes of the State Department and the JCS. They were often inadequately staffed; and they were given little active or effective support and backing from the Department of State which at the time did not appear organized or equipped to furnish prompt and authoritative current policy advice and information for the Theatre Commander. Their effectiveness thus depended almost entirely on their personal ability to gain the ear of the Theatre Commander, and that our Political Advisers were able to play as much of a role as they did is a high tribute to their personal qualities and abilities. To these may be attributed the fact that the idea of having Political Advisers in Theatres of Operations is now generally accepted in American military thinking, even though no clear concept or "doctrine" of the function and status of such Political Advisers has yet been developed in State or Defense.

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In approaching this problem, it is necessary to consider the position and role of Theatre Commander. In standard American military doctrine he is a military officer in command of military operations, receiving orders and directives only from the JCS, and, he is regarded as the single and supreme American authority in his Theatre in all matters relating to his operations, whether they be military, logistical, political or economic in nature. This doctrine of the supreme authority of the Theatre Commander has obvious advantages in dealing with military operations as such and for their own sake. It is workable for broader purposes if it is coupled with a realization that a Theatre Commander is something more than a commander of troops in the field, and that by virtue of his position he possesses what amounts to proconsular powers and responsibilities of a political and economic nature, as well as his more strictly military powers and responsibilities; and that he is in effect the representative of the President rather than being simply an instrument of the JCS and Department of Defense. This means that his over-all decisions and objectives should or may depend on political and economic factors quite as much as on military and tactical considerations, and that as Theatre Commander he will have to make many on-the-spot political and economic decisions, some of them at variance with the views of his military advisers and commanders and some at variance with the views of his Political Adviser. This is one of the inescapable responsibilities of Theatre command. Moreover, his political and economic responsibilities in dealing with allied forces and with local populations and governments, whether they be friendly, neutral, or enemy (including

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Military Government responsibility) are extremely broad and extremely heavy. All these are matters in which he can and should seek, and should have, expert and authoritative guidance and advice. American officers who have exercised Theatre command have quickly realized this and acted accordingly by utilizing Departmental establishments and officers within their Theatres, by appointing Political Advisers to their staffs, or both.

If we consider the nature of the over-all responsibility of the Theatre Commander, the function of the Department of State becomes clearer. In its simplest terms, it is to furnish the Theatre Commander with a senior civilian adviser who can give him the benefit of the best possible political and economic guidance, advice and personal assistance that the resources of the U.S. Government can provide. Specifically, in addition to developing appropriate foreign policy directives, and political and economic directives for issuance through JCS to Theatre Commanders, the Department should supply to Theatre Commanders, seasoned and qualified Political Advisers; it should furnish the Political Adviser with authoritative current policy information and advice and should backstop his inquiries promptly and effectively; and it should coordinate the handling of political and economic problems with the JCS, and with the interested civilian agencies of the Government.

In the Theatre the function of the Political Adviser should be to make the maximum contribution to the over-all objectives of the U.S. and to the success of the Theatre Commander's mission by acting as an objective, if sympathetic, adviser and counsellor to the

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Commander on all important matters. These may involve strategic and tactical objectives, choice of methods, strategic bombing targets, etc., and certainly will include Civil Affairs and Military Government matters, Psychological Warfare, intelligence evaluation, clandestine operations, arms assistance, economic assistance, and the very extensive range of political contacts on these and other subjects with associated powers, as well as the general political problem involved in international commands such as NATO, and UN commands. It cannot be overemphasized that the influence of the Political Adviser will depend primarily on his personal qualities and the personal relationship of mutual confidence and understanding which he may be able to establish with the Theatre Commander. This in turn will be greatly enhanced by the degree to which the Department supports and assists him in furnishing useful political information and advice, plus a clearer understanding between State and Defense as to his appropriate role, function, status, and areas of interest in any given Theatre.

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CONCLUSIONS

I. It seems highly desirable in the interests of both State and Defense that a general understanding be reached between the two Departments, and the JCS, as to the appropriate status and function of U.S. Political Advisers in active U.S. military Theatres of Operations.

II. Each Theatre will present a unique over-all problem, and every Theatre Commander-Political Adviser relationship will rest upon a different personal basis. Accordingly such an understanding should be framed, not as a limitation on the Theatre Commander's authority or discretion, but as a means of furnishing him with a recognized and standard facility to assist him in discharging the over-all responsibilities of his particular Theatre.

III. In formulating such a general understanding certain points or desiderata require consideration if the Political Adviser is to function with a maximum of objective usefulness to the Theatre Commander:

1. The Political Adviser is the senior civilian member of the Theatre Commander's staff and must be acceptable to the Theatre Commander.
2. He should have personal and official rank as Ambassador or Minister depending on circumstances, and assimilated military rank next to that of the Theatre Commander.
3. He should have an adequate civilian and military staff of qualified regional and functional experts to assist him directly and
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for special detail to military staff and field units as indicated by the Theatre Commander, and this staff should be established as an integral part of the Theatre Commander's staff. All of the civilian members of his staff should have appropriate assimilated military rank for purposes of military protocol and administration as regards office space, housing, messing facilities, transportation, communications, and the like.

4. The Political Adviser's potential ability to contribute by his counsel and advice to the success of the Theatre Commander's mission may extend to all important matters in the Theatre, including major strategic and tactical objectives, choice of means, strategic bombing targets, etc., and in especial to such things as Civil Affairs and Military Government matters, Psychological Warfare, intelligence evaluation, clandestine operations, arms assistance, economic and financial aid, and political contacts with associated powers on these and other matters including the political problems of international commands such as NATO and UN commands. His relation to these matters should, however, remain advisory and consultative in character, and he should not undertake direct operational responsibilities in these fields.

5. In his advisory role he should act as an independent and objective, though sympathetic counsellor to the Theatre Commander on all important matters.

6. To enable the Political Adviser to act effectively and to make the maximum contribution to the success of the Theatre Commander's mission, he should have:

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- (a) Direct access to the Theatre Commander.
- (b) Direct access to the Chief of Staff and to the various general and special staff sections.
- (c) Freedom of movement within the Theatre including direct access to military field commanders subject to normal coordination through command channels.
- (d) Direct communications with the Department of State (including use of his own cryptographic system) and freedom to consult with it directly, although the Political Adviser should keep the Theatre Commander fully advised of all communications of a substantive or policy character. (Conversely the Theatre Commander should keep the Political Adviser fully informed of his substantive communications with Defence except those of a strictly technical military character.)

7. Policy advice and information sent by the Department to the Political Adviser should not be regarded as having directive force as regards the Theatre Commander, but simply as matter submitted for his and the Theatre Commander's information and consideration, on which the latter may either act on his own responsibility, or regarding which he may seek a JCS directive. In all cases it should be notified promptly to the JCS, and where appropriate the Department should request a confirming JCS directive. There should be the fullest possible exchange between the JCS and the Department on all communications with the Theatre except those of a strictly technical military character.

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8. The Theatre Commander may delegate the Political Adviser to act for him in dealings with national governments and their representatives in the Theatre, and may assign to him supervisory responsibility as regards political contacts with lower levels of national or local governments or authorities.

9. The Theatre Commander may assign to the Political Adviser responsibility for policy coordination as regards other U.S. civilian and politico-military agencies in the Theatre, including Psychological Warfare and special operations, and may seek the Political Adviser's advice as to the scope and extent of the programs and activities of such agencies.

10. The foregoing principles when coordinated with Defense should be implemented in State Department instructions to Political Advisers, and by appropriate JCS directives to the Theatre Commander, incorporation in field manuals and the like so that there shall be a firm basis of understanding between State and Defense, and between the Theatre Commander and the Political Adviser, as to the latter's status and terms of reference.

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RECOMMENDATION

That Mr. Durbrow, Mr. Carter and other members of the informal committee discuss the contents of this study informally and personally with appropriate officers in Defense and the JCS with a view to determining the feasibility of seeking an understanding on the subject matter on a more formal basis, and advising the Deputy Under Secretary of State with respect thereto.

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